

Global Cultural Literacy



Purpose

As our world becomes increasingly interconnected, it's not only a great trait but fundamental to understand world cultures. In this lesson, we will explore how cultural norms differ from region to region, highlighting the importance of recognizing differences, cooperating with others, and communicating properly.

Introduction

Social norms are a key part of communication. No matter where you live, there are commonplace social "rules" that you must follow. For example, consider the following:

Imagine that you're meeting a friend at a local restaurant. You show up first. What do you do? Be as descriptive as possible.

After your friend arrives, what happens next? What do you say to them? What movements do you make?

As you eat/drink, how do you interact with your friend? How do you look at them? How do you show that you're listening to them?

Although these might seem like simple day-to-day things, they do vary drastically by country and community!

For example, in France the practice of *la bise*, a series of light kisses on the cheek (which change in number and position in different regions) is commonplace as a greeting for friends and family.

Or in the United States, it's nearly mandatory to leave a 10-20% tip on every drink or meal. Because employees work for tips, it's considered to be highly disrespectful to not leave a sizable tip.

And in Japan, consuming noodle or broth-based dishes involves actively "slurping" the food. Rather than using a fork or chopsticks to swirl noodles, it is customary to simply drink from the bowl. It is considered respectful to "slurp" the food as a way to show delight and satisfaction toward the dish.

For each of these practices, what would happen if you did this in another culture? For example, if you practiced *la bise* in South Africa, tipped in Spain, or slurped your food in Brazil?

Deep Dive

What would you *not* do if you visited your country? Many popular YouTubers create content for traveling, offering suggestions for navigating other cultures. Check out some of the following:

United States: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2w6ephOxnTY>

Japan: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQgF5faoYdk>

Italy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98_9AS89R3Y

Puerto Rico: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihPDUtCsFm0>

Argentina: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5e_0giV1yHw






Consider the cultural differences in your area.

Create a poster or video about your culture, community, city, or region. What do people need to know about visiting your space? What recommendations would you offer them to do? How should they communicate with others? What's different about your area versus others? What should they avoid?

Think about including concepts like...

- What should people avoid? What should they not avoid?
- How should people interact with others?
- What should people try?
- What's odd about where you live to foreigners? Why?
- What should people be concerned about, if anything?
- What's a common misconception about your area?

Reflect

How would you rate your understanding of this concept? <i>Place an "X" in the corresponding box below.</i>				
				

How has your understanding of this concept changed as a result of this lesson?

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Which individual or community actions could this activity inspire?

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Different cultures around the world have different social norms. Why would it matter to understand this?

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